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Review of *Time's Shadow: Remembering a Family Farm in Kansas* By Arnold J. Bauer

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Time's Shadow: Remembering a Family Farm in Kansas. By Arnold J. Bauer. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012. xviii + 156 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography. \$24.95.

In *Time's Shadow*, Arnold J. Bauer has chronicled his family's small farm in Goshen Township, Clay County, Kansas. Like many farm memoirs chronicling the middle years of the twentieth century, its value and interest lie in its capturing a place and way of life far removed from our experiences in the twenty-first century.

Bauer effectively highlights the issue of distance and its significance to his childhood. His family's farm in eastern Kansas was fifteen miles from Clay Center, a distance that seems laughably small from today's perspective. In the years before World War II, however, that was a long expanse, not one that rural people traveled casually. Chores and bad roads kept people closer to home. Country schools kept farm children in rural neighborhoods. When Bauer began high school in Clay Center, he felt as if he belonged to a culture completely different from that of his town-raised peers. His clothes, his pastimes, and the demands on his time were different. He never felt at home with them. The homogenization of culture accompanying the introduction of television and the Internet along with the spread of school consolidation in the last half-century has largely closed this particular country-town gulf.

So many elements of Bauer's book either remind or newly inform readers of a world that has vanished. Farming was unromantic, hard work, done by everyone living on the farm, children included. The family home had no indoor plumbing, and only received electricity when Bauer's father eventually wired it. The only phone was a party line. Families slaughtered and preserved their pork, chicken, and beef at home. It's no wonder they had very little time to spend in town, in unproductive leisure. When people died, they largely did so at home. Some of those who died were children, victims of farm accidents. Bauer and his cousins and friends, who came of age during World War II and the Korean War, led the parade away from the nation's farms toward the cities.

With its short chapters and lively prose, the book is largely meant to entertain, but it has great educational value. Bauer leaves his readers with no doubts that the past is a foreign country, even when it took place right in one's own backyard.

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